

Transfiguration / February 27, 2022

Hebrews 3:3

“For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.”

Transfiguration Sunday commemorates the day three disciples, Peter, James and John, saw Jesus in the glory He has with the Father from eternity. What a sight! Luke says, “His face was altered and His clothing became dazzling white.” They also saw the two most important people in the Old Testament standing beside Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Moses was the law giver. He received the law from the Lord and mediated the covenant between the Lord and Israel on Mount Sinai. Elijah was the foremost prophet of the Old Testament. He stood against King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, when they tried to turn Israel away from the worship of the Lord. Elijah had been taken to heaven in a fiery chariot. Moses died and was buried in a place known only to God. They had been gone for centuries! Now they stood together beside Jesus. That was odd! Then there was the voice from heaven declaring, “This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to Him!” A most extraordinary experience for the disciples.

Luke says afterwards “they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.” What did it mean? What does it mean? It means that more than a human prophet, Jesus is God from eternity. It means that more than a teacher of the law, Jesus would fulfill the law in our place and pay our legal debt, so that the just condemnation of eternal death, would be lifted from our heads and we would be raised to eternal life. The transfiguration shows that Jesus is the one of whom Moses and the Prophets spoke, when they foretold the coming of the Messiah. The heavenly voice tells us He is God’s Son. We listen to Him as the Son of God. He speaks words of forgiveness and life. He is our Saviour in time and for eternity.

It took time to process. It took longer to understand. In fact, they didn’t really understand what it meant, until after Jesus had risen from the dead. After Jesus had been glorified in dying and rising, He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He showed in the words of Moses and the prophets, everything written about Him. He explained that it was necessary for Him to suffer death, before entering into His glory. What they caught a glimpse of in His transfiguration, they saw fully in His resurrection. They understood that more than a prophet, more than a law giver that He is the Son of the Living God, begotten from eternity, born a human being in time. They understood that He is the one to whom Moses and the prophets pointed, when they spoke of the King of Israel, who would receive an everlasting kingdom and who would bring salvation to all the nations of the world. He is greater than Moses and the prophets. He is before them in eternity and above them as their Creator.

Jesus is greater than Moses. More than a giver of law, He fulfilled the law through His sinless life and sacrificial death. Jesus is greater than the prophets. He fulfilled their words, by becoming the Saviour of the world. Moses and Elijah stood at Jesus’ side to show that He is the promised Saviour. As it says in Revelation, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Jesus is our Saviour from everything that separates us from God; the sin within and around us. Jesus is our Redeemer, who through the sacrifice of His cross, lifted the condemnation of eternal death from the heads of all who believe. We have peace with God through the blood of His cross and the promise of dwelling forever in the Father’s presence in His resurrection to life everlasting.

The author of Hebrews began his letter, comparing Jesus to the prophets. He said, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” In our text the author compares Jesus to Moses, saying that Jesus is superior to Moses as the builder of a house is superior to a servant in the house. Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house in his time. Jesus is faithful over God’s house forever, as His Son and our Saviour.

Jesus is above and beyond Moses, both in terms of His divine being and in terms of His work as our Saviour from sin and our Redeemer from eternal death.

Moses had a unique and singular relationship with God. The Lord said He spoke to prophets through dreams, but He spoke to Moses as a man speaks with his friend. Moses was the most important person in the Jewish religion at the time of Christ. He was revered as the law giver. Israel at the time of Christ, lived by the law; believing that it was through obedience to the law that they had access to God and were made right in His sight. Jesus had great controversy with the Pharisees and teachers of Israel, regarding the purpose and function of the law. They saw the law as a tool, by which they made themselves righteous before God. Jesus saw the Law as the tool, by which we are made aware of our sin and of our need for God's mercy in forgiveness. Moses shows us our sin, so we would pray, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner." Jesus comes to us with forgiveness. In Jesus we receive what no law can give; the mercy of forgiveness, the blessing of a good conscience and peace in relationship with God.

Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant. Jesus is faithful over God's house as a Son. What is God's house? God's house is not a building of wood, stone or other earthly construction material. God's house is His people and our hearts are His home. God makes our hearts His home through the Holy Spirit, given to us in our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus. The church (the fellowship of believers, the body of Christ) is His house, in which He dwells by the same Spirit who dwells within us individually. Moses brought the children near to the presence of God at the foot of Mount Sinai. The law can only bring us so close to God. Jesus brings us fully into the presence of God through the gospel of forgiveness. In Christ we stand in the presence of God, through the Spirit He gives to dwell within us. In eternity Jesus will bring us to dwell fully in the Lord's presence, in His heavenly house, in His resurrection.

Moses was faithful in his lifetime, but when his lifetime ended so did his service. The law of obedience and commands is good only in time. It can never bring us to eternity. Jesus is faithful over God's house forever, as our Saviour from sin and Redeemer from death. Death has no power over Him. He conquered death through His cross and claimed victory in His resurrection. As the representative of the law, Moses shows our need for Jesus. Jesus fulfilled the law. Jesus brings us into God's presence and makes us members of His house, through the sacrifice of His cross, by which He atoned for our sin. Jesus shows Himself to be our Saviour not in laws written on stone, but through the blood He shed on the cross. He is the way and the truth and the life. We come to the Father through Him. St. Paul wrote in the letter to the Ephesians, "For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Therefore, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

Moses is not as popular among Christians as he is among Jewish people today, or as he was among the Jews of Jesus' day. Nevertheless, as the chief representative of the Law, Moses is important! Moses lives in all our hearts. He is our conscience that reminds us of our sin. We need Moses in our hearts. He shows that none of us can make ourselves acceptable to God, by the holiness of our lives. Moses shows us our sin, so that the Spirit would lead us to the feet of Jesus. In Jesus, we receive mercy in the pardon of peace. Through Jesus, we have access to God in peace. In His resurrection we will one day stand in the presence of God. We also will behold the glory radiating from His divine being and see the love shining from His face. God in His mercy, bring us to that day. In Jesus' Name. Amen